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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The major emphasis at Ferguson School was language arts. An evaluation revealed that, in every grade tested, the number of pupils attaining grade or above-grade scores increased. Data from the Informal Reading Inventories, administered three times during the school year, indicated a mean growth of two book levels. The area in which the least amount of growth in language arts seemed to have taken place was that of creativity.

The in-service courses provided for teachers and the continued help of the school consultants were reported to have been valuable aids in expanding and improving teaching techniques. In school-community relations, parents generally showed a cooperative attitude toward the school. The enrichment program was judged to be very successful. After-school activities, in most cases, retained student interest throughout the year; the field trips were well-attended.

Future plans to help raise the scholastic achievement level of pupils include homogeneous grouping for reading, more planned opportunities for creative writing, the use of oral reading, films, recordings and other techniques to develop an appreciation for good prose and poetry. For arithmetic, drills should be continued, and, for social studies and science, use of audio-visual aids should be expanded. Teacher growth could be advanced in the area of instruction with the use of cataloging instructional aids available in school. Activities should be planned to continue and expand the staff's loyalty toward teaching, the school, and its program. The school-community relations program should see to it that parents are encouraged to visit the school regularly and that there are more "getting acquainted" evening meetings of teachers and parents. The enrichment program could be extended to include third-year pupils, and more opportunities should be available to display the results of after-school activities.

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GREAT CITIES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

STAR PROGRAM

1963 - 64

JOSEPH C. FERGUSON SCHOOL
7th & Norris Streets
Philadelphia 22, Pa.

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THE STAR PROGRAM

Two years have now passed since we became a part of the Great Cities School Improvement Program. The time is now opportune to look critically at what has been accomplished, what we might have done better, and what still needs to be done. It is the purpose of this report to take such a critical look and - in light of what it discloses - to formulate a future course of action for the Star Program.

Part I - A Look Back

The evaluative statements and conclusions which follow are drawn from three sources: 1) results of the standardized testing program, 2) results of IRI's and other tests, and 3) critical comments made by members of the staff and others associated with the program.

A. Pupil Growth

1. In Scholastic Achievement

Since our major emphasis was again on the language arts, we are beginning our evaluation in this area.

a. Reading

The second year of our program was marked by the same kind of gradual growth in reading which had taken place earlier. This did not seem to be borne out by standard test scores; many of our pupils are still reading below grade level and this tends to produce a negative picture in grade-standardized tests. However, several other factors appear to indicate definite signs of growth in our pupils' reading achievements:

1) In every grade tested, the number of pupils who attained grade or above-grade scores increased.

2) Informal Reading Inventories, administered three times during the school year, indicate a mean growth of two book levels. This compares favorably with city-wide results.

3) The number of non- and low level readers in Grades 4,5, and 6 has been reduced significantly. Most of the pupils who still fall into this category are seriously retarded, entered our school late, or face a language problem.

4) Growth in the developmental aspects of reading has exceeded that in the comprehension phases. The ability to use reading as a tool subject has not yet reached the desired level.

The literature enrichment programs, again, have been very productive. The pupils, generally, have evidenced genuine enthusiasm for the auditorium programs. But, there seems to be, still, a need for closer articulation between these programs and the individual classrooms. (This will be given further consideration in our planning for the future.)

b. Spelling

There seems to be a cleavage of opinion on the effectiveness of our spelling program. Standard test scores indicate achievement slightly above that of preceding years. Certain teachers, however, feel that results should have been higher than those actually attained. In part, this seeming "lack" may be attributable to several factors:

1) The increasing number of Puerto Rican pupils and their language handicap.

2) Too little opportunity to "functionalize" spelling skills in creative writing.

3) The poor speech habits of many pupils which make it difficult for them to "visualize" words phonetically.

c. Other Language Arts

The area in which the least amount of growth seems to have taken place is that of creativity. One cause for this lag lies in the fact that too little emphasis was placed on this aspect of the language arts. Another cause is the pupils' lack of opportunity for self-expression in the home. A third cause is the pupils' tendency to think and speak in single-word or short-phrase patterns rather than in sentences.

d. Arithmetic

The success of our "4 - 40" program seems to confirm the need for constant and continuous drill in the area of arithmetic. Understanding the newer arithmetic concepts can help significantly in bringing about the pupils' acceptance of arithmetic as a utilitarian subject. But their success in applying basic skills to the solution of problems is dependent upon their efficiency in the use of those skills. Only practice and drill can effect the desired proficiency.

e. Social Studies and Science

The workshops and demonstration lessons which took place during certain of our faculty meetings were only a beginning in these areas. Much more needs to be done. The emphasis in the unit approach to the teaching of social studies needs to be expanded from only the historical or social aspects to the ecological or geographic as well.

f. Other Areas of the Curriculum

A number of outstanding results were achieved in the area of art, music, and industrial arts. The consensus of the staff is that more use could be made of the special talents of certain members of the group and of the services of the supervisors in these areas.

2. In Modification of Behavior

Generally, there seems to be significant evidence, among our pupils, of increased respect for the school and its rules. In spite of a few cases of non-conformity, most pupils have accepted authority as an essential part of the democratic school process. Fewer serious problems have been referred to the office.

However, there is need, still, for more consideration by the pupils of one another's rights. Misunderstandings and - sometimes - open flare-ups are too prevalent.

The pupils' willingness to assume responsibility for school property has grown. There has been considerably less tendency to deface the building; the little vandalism of this sort that still occurs takes place outside of regular school hours and could be the work of non-Ferguson pupils.

3. In Aspirational Levels

There has been considerable increase in the pupils' desire to attain success. They show more concern about marks and ways to improve them. Generally, their attitude toward learning is positive; this is in decided contrast to their former attitude of disinterest and even resistance.

B. Teacher Growth

The in-service courses and continued help by the consultants have again been valuable aids in expanding and improving teaching techniques. The addition of an arithmetic consultant and in-service courses in that area has effected a promising beginning in the teaching of the newer arithmetic concepts.

It has been gratifying to note the interest shown by the new members of our staff and by the substitute teachers filling vacancies in our organization. They have readily volunteered their services when needed and have become active participants in all aspects of the program.

C. School - Community Relations

Parents, generally, have shown a cooperative attitude toward the school. They seem to be aware of what we are trying to do with and for their children and - is most cases - want to help in this undertaking. There has been a marked increase in the number of parents who visit the school to inquire about their children's progress. Occasionally, this inquiry is motivated by a spirit of "challenge;" more often, it stems from genuine concern about the child's needs and a desire for success.

The number of parents who offer to help in school projects has been steadily increasing. Much of this is the direct result of the work of the school-community coordinators.

The parents' willingness to join and participate in adult projects has not been marked by the same kind of sustained interest. These are areas which will be given added emphasis in our future program.

The past year also saw an increase in volunteer services for our program. They included tutoring and instruction in hobbies. This, too, is an area which we should like to expand in the future.

D. Our Enrichment Program

This aspect of our program was one of the most successful. The after-school activities, in most cases, retained their interest throughout the year. The trips were well-attended and, had more bus-service been available, would have exceeded the actual number undertaken.

Our future plans for enrichment experiences will emphasize diversification and, to the extent that it is possible, expansion of the program.

Part II - A Look Ahead

Our future plan for the Star Program has three purposes:

1. To continue those practices which have produced favorable results.
2. To expand or modify those aspects of the program whose results have not yet reached desired levels.
3. To introduce new activities which will help us attain success in areas as yet untouched.

A. Pupil Growth

1. In Scholastic Achievement

To help raise the scholastic achievement level of our pupils, we plan to incorporate or extend the use of the following techniques in our program.

a. Reading

1) Homogeneous grouping, based upon the pupils' instructional reading levels, instead of reading cycles in Grades 4, 5, and 6. The ultimate success of this type of organization will depend upon the teachers' awareness of pupil growth and proper placement and the flexibility with which adjustments can be made.

2) Planned and systematic concentration upon reading for comprehension through:

   a) More extensive drill on word meanings. Use of the dictionary, word-study lessons (i.e., recognition

and identification of prefixes, suffixes, and stems (or word-roots), word-games, and experience-enriched vocabulary lists.

b) Daily oral and/or written question-answer reviews of materials covered in all areas.

c) Wider use of familiar reading media, such as newspapers, magazines, street signs, advertising posters, etc.

d) Greater attention to recall, inference, and experience as tools of comprehension.

e) More frequent use of testing materials which emphasize comprehension. (Commercial and teacher-constructed tests.)

f) Practice in drawing conclusions from what has been read.

g) Questions and other stimuli to critical thinking.

h) Development of good listening habits.

i) Use of workbooks.

j) Oral and written story and book reviews

k) Use of comprehension exercise in the Junior Scholastic and Weekly Reader magazines

l) Regular utilization of research and outlining as study techniques.

3) Cultivation of the desire to read for pleasure by:

a) Reading more often to the pupils (to whet their own reading appetites)

b) Making more books available to the pupils in the classrooms

c) Scheduling time for independent reading for enjoyment

d) Encouraging the pupils to bring in and share their own reading materials

e) Supplementing social studies and other curricular areas with fiction and non-fiction related to subject under study

f) Devising a program for giving recognition to the pupils for their reading achievements

g) Taking trips to neighborhood or other branches of the public library

h) Inviting members of the staff and others to tell or read stories to the pupils

i) Using films, filmstrips, and recordings of well-known stories.

j) Encouraging parents to provide more books at home, foster reading, and discuss books with their children

k) Dramatizing books read in class (stage plays, radio scrips, pantomimes, and puppet and marionette shows)

l) Featuring a "Book-of-the-Week" or "Book-of-the-Month" in the classroom or school library

m) Using the teachers' own enthusiasm for books to arouse similar enthusiasm among the pupils

n) Organizing book-reading clubs.

b. Creative Expression

1) More planned opportunities for creative writing

2) Use of "pen pals" and other techniques to foster creative writing

3) Insistence upon proper oral and written expression in all areas of the curriculum

4) Greater emphasis upon the simple, basic rules of grammar (e.g.,sentence concept, number and person agreement of subject and verb, etc.)

5) Use of school paper and other devices for "displaying" pupils' creative work.

6) Greater use of pupils' direct and vicarious experiences as bases for creative expression

c. Speech Habits

1) Insistence upon use of complete thoughts in speaking, when practical

2) Inclusion of "oral expression" opportunities in the curriculum

3) Use of tape recorder to enable pupils to evaluate own speech

4) Wider use of plays and skits

5) Teachers' speech as model for pupils

6) Identification and correction of common speech errors

7) Use of oral reading, choral speaking, recitations, etc. to encourage good speech habits

8) Use of recordings as models of good speech

9) Phonic and phonetic drill

10) Use of group "dialogues" and discussions as learning techniques

d. Other Phases of Language Arts

1) Use of oral reading, films, recordings and other techniques to develop in the pupils an appreciation for classical and other good prose and poetry

2) Added emphasis on spelling as a functional subject through:

   a) Spelling bees
   b) Written spelling contests
   c) Other educational "games"

3) Creation of an annual or semi-annual anthology of pupils' creative work

4) Panel discussions in assembly to encourage facility of expression

e. Arithmetic

1) Continue and expand "4 - 40" drills.

2) Make wider use of workbooks, flash cards, and other drill techniques for "fixing" of number facts. Work for automatic response.

3) Make more practical use and application of concrete instructional materials.

4) Place added emphasis on the steps and techniques of problem-solving. Use problems as part of every arithmetic lesson.

5) Expand interest of higher-achieving pupils through use of "newer arithmetic concepts".

f. Social Studies and Science

1) Wider use of audio-visual aids

2) Hallway and classroom displays

3) Greater emphasis on current happenings as motivational device for teaching social studies

4) More practical use of trips

5) Wider use of available social studies materials, old and new, as far as possible

6) Use of social studies and science as basis for assembly programs (culminating activities)

7) Greater use of resource persons

8) Diagnostic use of all types of testing materials

9) More emphasis on construction and use of maps, charts, and graphs

10) Greater emphasis upon geographic and environmental concepts and their effects on man

11) Practice in use of table of contents and index as aids in research

12) Greater emphasis on use of newspapers, magazines, almanacs, encyclopedias, etc.

13) Emphasis upon application of discriminatory reasoning to differentiate between fact and opinion

14) Provision of "special" opportunities for slow-learning pupils and enrichment opportunities for accelerated pupils

15) Greater stressing of techniques used in obtaining, organizing, and sharing information

16) Emphasis upon the scientific approach to learning

17) Use of current happenings as bases for science learnings

18) Organization of Science Fair as culminating activity

g. Other Areas of the Curriculum

1) Development of greater appreciation for world's great music and art through records, displays, recitals, assembly programs, etc.

2) Special instruction for gifted pupils

3) School music festivals as outlets for pupils' talents

4) Trips to concerts, art museums, etc.

5) Recognition and display of pupils' creative expression in art and music

6) More frequent use of Young Audiences and other resource persons and groups

7) More emphasis upon industrial arts (especially as a corollary to other aspects of the curriculum)

8) Continued and added emphasis upon physical fitness and remedial exercises

2. In Behavior

a. Control

1) Formulation of specific code of behavior and dissemination to all pupils, parents, and teachers. Plans for enforcement

2) Direct and incidental emphasis on meaning and use of courtesy and good manners

3) School-wide and classroom "good-manner" or "courtesy" campaigns

4) Consistency in interpretation of standards of behavior and strict adherence to code

5) Emphasis upon respect for, and cooperation with, service groups

6) Fostering of respect for school and community property through special programs, displays, and beautification campaigns

7) Greater emphasis upon pupils' recognition of, and respect for, one another's rights through:

   a) More opportunity for group activities

   b) Adaptation of "buddy" system among pupils

b. Attitudes

1) Encouragement of good personal appearance through praise and other forms of recognition (periodic checks)

2) Revival and expansion of good grooming classes

3) Raising of pupils' self-pride through recognition of successful achievement

4) Discussions about well-known persons as models for behavior, aspirations, etc.

5) Encouraging pupils to place greater emphasis upon positive assets as counter to frustrations induced by lacks

6) Talks by successful persons to inspire pupils to greater efforts

B. Teacher Growth

1. In Instructional Improvement

a. Cataloguing of instructional aids available in school (types, locations, use, etc.)

b. Workshop in use of audio-visual aids

c. Expanded use of consultants in classrooms

d. In-service courses in various curriculum areas (other than language arts and arithmetic)

e. Greater use of opportunities to observe at Masterman and other schools

f. Teacher study-groups at grade levels

g. Organization of professional library

h. Periodic reviews and discussions of curriculum guides

i. In-service courses on use of records and forms, where needed

j. Greater use of talents, "know-how" and abilities of experienced teachers as an aid to those with less experience

k. Experimentation with team teaching techniques in certain areas

l. Development of specific helps for the teaching of science (guide sheets, simple experiments, etc.)

m. Opportunities for periodic evaluation (including self-evaluation)

2. In General Attitude

a. Activities planned to continue and expand the staff's loyalty toward teaching, the school, and its program

b. Refresher course for staff (orientation course for new teachers) on background, needs, and interests of pupils

c. More widely diversified delegation of responsibilities

C. School - Community Relations

1. With Parents

a. Continued encouragement of parents to visit school regularly

b. Increased use of classroom mothers for trips

c. "Getting acquainted" evening meetings of teachers and parents

d. Periodic newsletters to keep parents informed about school's activities and problems

e. Use of parents as volunteer assistants in non-teaching assignments

f. Workshops and discussion groups for parents to orient them in ways to help their children at home

g. Hobby and craft clubs and other social functions for parents

h. Opportunities for parents to visit classrooms during school day

i. Greater involvement of parents in planning activities for parents

2. With Wider Community

a. Expanded participation by school personnel in community affairs

b. Greater involvement of community leaders in the school's program

D. The Enrichment Program

1. After - School Activities

a. Extension of program to include third-year pupils

b. More opportunities to display results of after-school activities

c. Revision and/or modification of after-school program as indicated by review of past interest and attendance

d. Addition of new activities with volunteer sponsors, if necessary (e.g., arts and crafts, sewing club, etc.)

2. Trips

a. Development of bulletin to serve as guide in planning and implementing trips

b. Preparation and duplication of list of places to visit

c. Demonstrations of ways to use trips as motivation for added learning experiences

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